

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Natural Resource Commission**

**ITEM**

**13**

**DECISION**

**TOPIC**

Natural Resource Based Business Opportunities Grant Program (NRBBOGP)

Commission approval is requested for the committee recommendations for the Natural Resource Based Business Opportunities Grant Program. A total of \$300,000 was appropriated from the DNR Environment First Fund for the development of projects related to natural resource based business opportunities. Local Resource Conservation and Development boards sponsored by county governments or Soil and Water Conservation Districts were eligible to receive funding on a competitive basis that the application identified a dollar for dollar or in-kind match.

The Natural Resource Based Business Opportunities Grant Program Review Committee consisting of Cy MacDonald (President of the Iowa League of RC&Ds), Lyle Asell (DNR – Director’s Office), and Diane Ford-Shivvers (DNR – Policy and Coordination) convened on September 21, 2007, to review a total of 29 RC&D projects requesting \$575,049 in funding. Based upon ranking committee recommendations, the Department requests NRC Approval of the following grants (see attached summary description for each project):

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>
Cedar Valley RC&D	Raw Wood Waste Fuel Utilization	\$15,500
Geode RC&D	Iowa-Shining NaturalLee: Exploring Natural Resources in Lee County	\$25,000
Golden Hills RC&D	Loess Hills Cultural Resource Study	\$25,000
Iowa Heartland RC&D	Pulley Produce and Walnuts: Growing a Minority-Owned Farm Business	\$14,450
Iowa League of RC&Ds	Creating Sustainable Economic Development Opportunities Based on Iowa's Scenic Byways	\$25,000
Iowa Valley RC&D	Birder's Tour of the Iowa and Cedar River Corridors	\$25,000
Limestone Bluffs RC&D	Development of a Canoe Rental and Campground Business on the Maquoketa River Water Trail	\$22,000
Northeast Iowa RC&D	Maximizing Trail Related Business Opportunities	\$21,000
Prairie Partners RCD	Development and Promotion of Water Trail Recreation Program	\$4,829
Prairie Rivers RC&D	Log Cabin Kit Startup	\$25,000
Prairie Winds RC&D	North Iowa Nature Experiences	\$25,000
Chariton Valley RC&D	Keuzter Sawmill Fuel Pellets	\$15,225
Interstate RC&D	Muscatine Agricultural Learning Center	\$23,873
Geode RC&D	Great River Certified Kitchen	\$9,250
Prairie Partners RCD	Hazelnut Processing and Marketing Project	\$23,873
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$300,000</b>

Ken Herring, Administrator  
Conservation and Recreation Division  
October 11, 2007

Attachment: NRBBOGP Summaries of Recommended Projects

**Natural Resource Based Business Opportunities Grant Program FY 2008**  
**Summaries of Recommended Projects**

**Raw Wood Waste Fuel Utilization** – Cedar Valley RC&D (Charles City) will work RENEW Energy-Briq Systems (REBS), local rural landowners (who are harvesting timber), and Tom Brown (private forestry consultant) to demonstrate the benefits of utilizing raw wood to create a usable wood fuel product. This project will utilize an in-kind match of \$17,550.

**Iowa—Shining Natural Lee: Exploring Natural Resources in Lee County** – Geode RC&D (Burlington) will: 1.) develop a series for four tours that focus on the natural resources of Lee County, 2.) develop and implement a interpretive training program for staff involved in these tours, and 3.) create and implement a marketing strategy for this project. This project will utilize a cash match of \$12,500 and in-kind match of \$17,200.

**Loess Hills Cultural Resources Study** – Golden Hills RC&D (Oakland) will contract with qualified professionals through an RFP process to complete a cultural resources study to be considered in the development of comprehensive cultural planning within the Loess Hills. This will include a prehistoric, historic, and architectural reconnaissance survey and gathering descriptive and analytical information about significant archaeological sites, structures, objects and districts. This will also help prepare for application for All American Road status which will increase marketing and promotion to the world. This project will utilize federal funds of \$202,000 and state funds of \$45,000 along with local funds of \$22,000.

**Pulley Produce and Walnuts: Growing a Minority-Owned Farm Business** – Iowa Heartland RC&D (Ankeny) is working with Pulley Produce, a small scale certified organic farm, to meet demand for their products and to grow their business to support at least one full-time and three part-time workers. This project will utilize a cash match of \$7,750 and an in-kind match of \$9,100.

**Creating Sustainable Economic Development Opportunities Based on Iowa's Scenic Byways** – Iowa League of RC&Ds (Ankeny) will work to increase the capacity of the Iowa League of RC&D to provide leadership, coordination, and training opportunities leading to the development of scenic byway organizations and natural resource based businesses associated with state designated byways. This project will utilize \$260,000 in cash match (\$130,000 secured from IDOT and \$130,000 request pending from USDA) along with an in-kind match of \$37,800.

**Birder's Tour of the Iowa and Cedar River Corridors** – Iowa Valley RC&D (Williamsburg) will work to produce a guidebook (printed form and on-line) of a birder's tour to the valleys. This guidebook will feature maps, aerial views, driving directions, day trip itineraries, and regulations as well as market small businesses to users of the guide. This will be in addition to two other guidebooks that were produced with funding from last year's NRBBGP that focuses on recreational opportunities. This project will utilize an in-kind match of \$12,500.

**Development of a Canoe Rental and Campground Business on the Maquoketa River Water Trail** – Limestone Bluffs RC&D (Maquoketa) will work to establish a public private partnership that will create and operate a public access, a dependable canoe rental business, and a primitive campground on the Maquoketa River Water Trail at Canton. This project will utilize a cash match of \$81,800 from grants and private donations.

**Maximizing Trail Related Business Opportunities** – Northeast Iowa RC&D (Postville) will work to provide business enhancement and creation assistance to NE Iowa businesses and entrepreneurs through a series of workshops that bring in entrepreneurs from other their communities to speak on how they have successfully developed or expanded their business to maximize trail markets. This project will utilize a cash match of \$15,000 and in-kind match of \$11,000.

**Development and Promotion of Water Trail Recreation** – Prairie Partners RC&D (Humboldt) will work to promote rural economic development by addressing the increasing demand for easily accessed recreational opportunities through the development and promotion of the Des Moines River as an identifiable water trail and by providing the needed recreational amenities by assisting and enhancing a fledging canoe/kayak rental business. This project will utilize a cash match \$1,032 and in-kind match of \$4,380.

**Log Cabin Kit Startup** – Prairie Rivers RC&D (Ames) helped to create a pilot lot cabin project with funding from last year's NRBBOGP. This project will take the project one step further establishing a business that will produce, market, and distribute customizable log cabin kits made with Iowa grown and process oak. This project will utilize a cash match of \$15,000 and in-kind match of \$100,000.

**North Iowa Nature Experiences** – Prairie Winds RC&D (Garner) will work to establish a new business called North Iowa Nature Experiences bringing nature tourism to North Iowa through a series of guided and self-guided journeys in a six county area on public and private lands during all four season of the year. This project will utilize a cash match of \$65,000.

**Keutzer Sawmill Fuel Pellets** – Chariton Valley RC&D (Centerville) will work with Keutzer Sawmill to convert waste material (sawdust) into a value-added product (fuel pellets). This project will utilize a cash match of \$9,900 and in-kind match of 5,800 both from Keutzer Sawmill.

**Muscatine Agricultural Learning Center** – Interstate RC&D (Milan, IL) will work with local organizations to build a state-of-art agriculture learning center which will ultimately broaden a strong, responsible citizen base for the future of Iowa and fulfill the serious gap of ag industry employees, and will serve as a means to continually advance the agricultural science field in Iowa. This project will utilize a cash match of over \$3.25 million secured through donations, sale of property, federal funding, and low interest loans.

**Great River Certified Kitchen** – Geode RC&D (Burlington) will work with Great River Food Alliance of Southeast Iowa, Inc. to complete a business plan and financing strategy for creating a shared kitchen that can be used by area producers to process their locally gown products into value-added goods. This project will utilize a cash match of \$10,250 and in-kind match of \$3,500.

**Hazelnut Processing and Marketing Project** – Prairie Partners RC&D (Humboldt) will work with local hybrid hazelnut growers to process and market hazelnut products. This project will utilize a cash match of \$81, 590 and in-kind match of \$56,590.